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## REFORM *versus* REFORMATION.

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REFORM, amendment; re-formation, making over, forming anew. Re-formation may be no amendment; amendment may be without re-formation. Reform embraces every change for the better, whether of form or substance. Re-formation includes all change whether for good or ill. The common derivation of these terms is responsible for much confusion of signification. Change is not infrequently denominated reform when it lacks any element of improvement, while reform is perhaps as often regarded as incompatible with the absence of change.

A familiar instance of this is seen in the use of the term "Civil-Service Reform." As an article of political faith it signifies a proposed change in the organization of our civil service. As a weapon of offense or defense to the "reformer," it includes every possible amendment of our civil administration. The "reformer" proposes certain specific changes in the selection, promotion, and tenure of our minor civil officers. Whether these changes would be beneficial to the country may be a question of grave doubt. Yet the "reformers" invariably declare that any one who expresses such doubt is by that fact shown to be affected with a desire to prevent the reform—*i. e.*, the amendment—of the civil service. The dual signification of this term has been the cause of no little harsh language which might otherwise have been avoided, and given rise to some apparent subterfuge which it is hardly pleasant to contemplate.

Because of this ambiguity, "reform" has become a catch-word of peculiar value to the advocate of mere change, whether in church or state. The implication of good to be achieved by the change proposed, and the quiet assumption of more exalted motive and exceptional purity, which is involved in the adoption of this name, is peculiarly flattering to the self-regard of the one who assumes it, as well as irritating to the consciousness of equality on the part of the one who opposes or doubts. The "reformer," when once he has obtained undisputed possession of this word, has always an immense advantage of position. Anything which is susceptible of reform is, *a priori*, incapable of defense. Then, too, "reform" is a cloak which may be made to cover a multitude of sins. The motives of a "reformer" are presumed to be above suspicion. Ambition, pride, self-seeking, and revenge are altogether inconsistent with the ideas of purity, self-sacrifice, and devotion to principle implied by the word "reformer." It is but natural, therefore, that every one who proposes a change in existent methods of thought or action should make haste to seat himself upon the hill-top of "reform," and whoever dares to question the wisdom of his proposed change is sure to be roundly denounced as obstructing progress, opposed to improvement, and desirous of promoting and continuing all the evils of the system which the "reformer" proposes to change.

So, in reference to civil-service reform, one is compelled to accept the specific changes proposed for better or worse, or be held to favor the most flagrant abuses of the present system. This is hardly fair, but it is, perhaps, unavoidable. A man may undoubtedly question the efficiency of a remedy without desiring to promote disease; but he who has passed beyond the region of doubt in regard to any proposed change, is usually so intense and clear in his own conviction that he regards the man who questions his theory, while admitting the evil, as even worse than he who clings to the wrong he proposes to abolish. Luther fought the See of Rome, but poured the fiercest vials of his wrath upon Zwinglius for differing as to the method of assault. Calvin thundered for the right of private conscience, but struck hands with the Papal persecutor, and roasted Servetus for inventing a new theory of the operation of grace.

It was this, no doubt, that led both of our great political parties to insert in their platforms high-sounding declarations in favor of reform of the civil service. To suppose that either party meant to bind itself to support the peculiar changes proposed by

the "reformers" is absurd. Such a construction is utterly inconsistent with the record of both parties in the exercise of their respective powers. The platforms were, no doubt, intended to be so taken by those inclined to favor the proposed re-formation, and by those unfavorable to this change, or doubtful of its policy, as meaning the amendment of the service by other and undefined methods. The draughtsmen simply played upon the double meaning of the word reform. They hid behind an ambiguity, and cheated with an undistributed middle. It was an artifice not at all creditable, yet by no means unusual in political definition. But the "reformers" cannot complain. It was but a repayment to them in their own coin. They had already been guilty of a like duplicity. They had apparently selected the ambiguous term for the very purpose of making capital out of its adjustable import. They were wounded by a two-edged sword of their own forging. Beyond question, very many of both classes use this term in its twofold sense without being conscious of the ambiguity.

No doubt the average civil-service "reformer" believes that the proposed system will actually reform, if carried into effect, and it is beyond question that every thoughtful individual of both parties recognizes the fact that there are evils and abuses in our present civil service which are, presumably, curable by some means. It is probable, too, that the greater proportion of both parties desire that these evils shall be remedied. Some, no doubt, favor the proposed system; others as honestly doubt its efficacy or fear its results; while still others, without any distinct comprehension of its nature, vaguely regard it as a sort of millennial extinguisher of all forms of evil or abuse in connection with every branch of the civil service.

On account of these diverse impressions, no doubt both of the great parties were afraid to declare themselves opposed to the re-formation of our service on the plan proposed, lest it should be construed into a declaration against the reform—*i. e.*, the amendment—of the service by *any* practical method, while entirely willing to assent to a general declaration in favor of the amendment of abuses not committing them to any specific method. The "reformer" may denounce this as a subterfuge, and so it is, but a subterfuge for which he prepared the way and issued the invitation. The constant iteration of the cry that those who oppose the plan laid down by them are in favor of "spoils

and corruption," may be said in a considerable degree to have excused the treatment they have received by party conventions.

It is fairly inferable from these ambiguous declarations and the course of action of the two parties that they are neither of them really in favor of the proposed re-formation, however much they may favor reform itself. It is now thirteen years since Mr. Jenckes brought this subject to the attention of the House of Representatives by his masterly report from the Joint Select Committee on Retrenchment—a report which still remains the strongest, fairest, and most statesmanlike presentation of the change proposed that has yet been made. The earnest, manly sincerity of Mr. Jenckes, and his undoubted desire to uncover and candidly consider every phase of the question involved, as well as his quiet pertinacity in pushing ideas to a practical issue, make it a matter of great regret that he was so soon removed from the discussion of the question he had propounded. A few rules and unimportant reports from the Civil Service Commission, with scattered articles in newspapers and magazines, constitute the literature of this movement, if we except the recent work of Mr. Dorman B. Eaton upon the "Civil Service in Great Britain." This work is a most interesting and valuable treatise upon an interesting portion of English political history. It has, no doubt, an important bearing upon two of the phases presented by our American movement, but cannot be accepted as at all conclusive as an argument for the adoption of a like system here. It is also open to this objection, that the author is so strong in his partisanship of a favorite idea that he can find no weakness or defect in its organic character or practical operation, nor is he willing to admit that any one who opposed the movement in Great Britain acted from other than corrupt and unworthy motives. According to Mr. Eaton's view there have been no honest men or patriots in England except the civil-service reformers. One is impressed after repeated readings with the idea that he deems this system a specific for all the possible ills of administration,—that for the first time a human thought has been evolved, which has the non-improvable quality usually ascribed alone to the language of inspiration. Especially is it unpleasant to note that the complaints of such distinguished natives of India as Sir Dinkhur Rao, and the reiteration of them by the most intelligent of recent English writers upon India, in regard to the character (not the economic efficiency) of the appointees under the civil-service rules in India, should have made no impression upon the

author while he carefully notes the opinions of the higher officers of the Indian Government in regard to their intelligence and efficiency in the performance of routine duties. So far as the English analogy is applicable to the conditions of our American system, however, Mr. Eaton may be said to have exhausted the argument therefrom. Its results, of course, even in England, are limited as yet to two points of view, to wit, the prime cost and formal efficiency of the service. So far as its wider and deeper influences upon the social and political life of the nation are concerned, it is yet too soon to trace them with any certainty.

The practical fruits of the movement here consist of the adoption of a set of rules governing admission to the civil service, under President Grant, an apparent attempt to enforce them for a time, and their final abandonment or at least practical non-user in many branches of the service, and modified application to others. Under President Hayes there has been some considerable show of progress in this direction. Some rather flaming general orders have been followed by many very significant failures to enforce them. The adherence to rule has been less notable than the numerous exceptions. Assuming to be a "reform" administration, it has yet found it necessary to illustrate the evils of patronage by numerous and glaring examples. This constitutes the sum of the Republican party's contribution toward a practical re-formation of the civil service on the basis urged by the "reformers."

The Democratic party, aside from its arraignment of the Republican party for its failure to do more, has shown its devotion to this idea only by offering, at the last moment of its lease of power, a bill which provides—so far as any mere act of Congressional legislation can—for the application of the basis principles of the change demanded, to future appointments and promotions. It is somewhat unfortunate for the reputation of its movers, for sincerity, that this bill comes at the time it does. After four years of supremacy in Congress they find themselves not only beaten in the Presidential election but also in danger of losing control very soon even of the Senate. When it thus becomes manifest that they will probably have neither the power to appoint nor the power to confirm during the next Presidential quadrenniate, they bring forward this measure of so-called "reform." It is greatly liable to the suspicion of being designed merely to worry their opponents and to embarrass the incoming administration by charging it with the duty of making an experiment

which is more than likely to be unpopular, at least in its immediate results.

This failure of both parties to carry into practical effect the changes desired by the civil-service "reformers" has been by them attributed solely to a desire on the part of the leaders of the respective parties to perpetuate the evils and abuses of the present system, or, as they are wont to phrase it, "to control the spoils." They are unwilling to admit that any one can hesitate between what we have and what they propose, except from some selfish or corrupt motive. They do not admit that one may "rather bear those ills we have than fly to others that we know not of," because they do not recognize the fact that any evils can exist under the system which they would inaugurate.

It would seem that such an universal impeachment of motive on the part of the "reformers" was, at least, unnecessary. The changes proposed are so great, and their possible consequences so remote and indeterminable, that the most impartial patriot, it would seem, might well be affected with doubt in regard to them. It is a great revolution—a proposition to overturn not only the practice but, apparently, some of the basis principles of our Government—to abridge what have heretofore been deemed the unquestionable rights of a great class of citizens—to restrict the constitutional power of the President and to establish a life tenure for an army of placemen. All these are said to be essential elements of a system which must be adopted as a whole or not at all. It ought not to be a matter of surprise that any one should hesitate to accept all these startling propositions at once.

Thus far the discussion has been based upon the hypothesis that there are but two alternatives—to continue the present system, with its abuses, or accept the proposed plan, with its undetermined consequences. To doubt that "Civil-Service Reform" means paradisiac purity among officials, and perpetual prosperity to the country, has come to be a sort of political heresy. Men sneer at "reform" as impractical, and denounce its promoters as visionary and Pharisaical, and, in return, are themselves written down as "politicians," "bosses," "ring-men" or "henchmen," in the "reformers'" black-list, which is intended to hold them up "to the scorn of all good men of all parties as the instruments of corruption, if not its active promoters." Yet there are men who doubt. There are even some whose doubt has almost grown into skepticism, who but a few years since were very strongly inclined

to the "reform" system of re-organizing the civil service. It is believed by some that the assumption by the "reformers" of corrupt intent on the part of all who do not accept their theories has tended to weaken rather than promote confidence in the system proposed. There are many who admit the defects of the present system, who are neither the recipients nor the distributors of patronage, and have no desire to be; who believe that a party which cannot stand without coercing the will of a single voter, by fraud, violence, or threat, ought not to stand at all; who see little difference between driving a negro from the polls with a "bull-whack" in Louisiana, and driving an office-holder to the polls with a threat in New York—a difference only in the method of doing the same wrong—the difference between a hint and a kick; who believe in principle, in American ideas and a bright future. They are, too, men who are accustomed to display the courage of their own convictions—who doubt, not so much the practicality of the civil-service system of re-organization, but the policy of it. There are men who question its compatibility with American ideas, and who insist that the "reformers" are bound to demonstrate, first, that the dangers of the present system are more hazardous than those which may ultimately flow from the one proposed; and, secondly,—a point which has been very generally overlooked,—that there is no better or less objectionable method of curing the ills of our present system and preserving its advantages. It would seem to be time for the "reformers" to consider whether a man may not be entirely honest, a patriot and a man of sincerity and independence, and yet doubt the policy of the change they propose? Whether such a man may not even regard their system, and its correlative ideas, as in the highest degree dangerous to our institutions and our liberties? Whether, in short, it would not be well for them to discuss this question upon the hypothesis that the average purity of those who question either the practicality or policy of their system, is not somewhere nearly on a level with that of the average "reformer" himself? It is with the hope of promoting this view of the subject that the writer has endeavored to formulate the opinions which such a person might well entertain. They are stated merely as doubts—the doubts of one who admits the evil claimed, seeks a remedy, but questions the efficacy and safety of the one proposed.

The essential elements of the re-formation of the civil service proposed by the "reformers," omitting detail, are:



*First.* The establishment of a system of rules having the force of laws, which shall govern all appointments and promotions of the minor civil officers of the Government.

*Second.* Admission to be only to the lowest grade of the service, and obtainable only by distancing other applicants in an open competitive examination.

*Third.* The higher grades to be filled only from the grades below, and promotion to be only on competitive examination.

*Fourth.* The tenure to be for life, and removal only for cause.

*Fifth.* No officer of the civil service to be assessed for the support of any political party, nor be allowed to take part in any caucus or other political organization farther than to cast his own vote.

These are, in effect, the significant provisions of the bill recently presented from the Democratic caucus, and said to have the approval of Mr. Eaton, the chairman of the Civil Service Commission. They make a logical and consistent whole only when supplemented with a provision for retirement and pension—a feature which is not now brought into prominence, but must certainly follow the organization of such a service. It is also admitted, though not beyond doubt, that a corps of officers thus organized might probably do the work of the Government at a somewhat cheaper rate than it would be done without a life tenure. Upon this point it should be observed, however, that the testimony of those departments which have had a corps of clerks engaged in curious estimates as to how much the others have done, the average number of pages written, papers filed, or cases determined, and making flaming estimates of dollars and cents saved to the Government, is by no means conclusive of this question—hardly, indeed, worth considering at all in connection with it. Take, for instance, the Pension or Patent Office. Its proper administration is to be determined less by the number of cases decided than by the justice and accuracy of its decisions. The real cost of such a system can only be determined when it shall have been operated so long that these officials for life begin to fail, retiring pensions to accumulate, and laws to be enacted, as now with regard to the army, to get long-lingering superiors out of the way of aspiring and deserving inferiors.

It is admitted, too, that in England the system on which this is modeled has been successful in giving a cheaper, more intelligent and effective service than the one it superseded. As to

the results of the same system in India, it is hard to speak with certainty. Nearly all of those who regard the Indian service as simply a machine for levying and collecting taxes and performing the routine work of governing a conquered people to the best advantage for the conquerors, are inclined to regard the new system with great favor. Those who regard British rule in India as merely the advance-guard of a civilization which finds its full development only in the elevation, happiness, and prosperity of the governed, are equally unanimous, it appears, in the belief that the civil administrators of British India should be selected quite as much with reference to individual character as with regard to that mathematical accuracy of detail which alone can be measured by competitive examination.

*First.* The first objection to the adoption of this system by our Government, and that which has been most frequently urged, is the lack of constitutional power to sustain such a system of legislative rules. In the distribution of governmental functions by the Constitution, Congress is given the power to "vest the appointment of such inferior officers as they may think proper in the President alone, in the courts, of law, or in the heads of departments." The power of appointment is an act of discretion, and the right to vest that power does not give the right to control its exercise. For the Congress to enact such a law is simply to set up a system which it has no power to enforce. It is farcical. The appeal to a moral power, a public sentiment which shall compel the appointor to recognize this sort of advisory legislation, is all very well, but it is not the sanction on which law rests. A re-formation of the civil service which depends on the whim of a secretary or the caprice of a president is hardly worth the amount of ill-blood already engendered by its discussion. This has been much mooted, but there are probably few lawyers who believe a claim based on such legislation would be upheld by the courts.

*Second.* The second objection is also one of form—the noting of a defect, perhaps, rather than an objection. Why confine the operation of this system to the "minor" offices of the administration? If we are to have a regular army of office-holders, it hardly seems fair to exclude them from the higher grades of the service. It seems like distinguishing against a most competent class. Except the President's constitutional advisers, what officers are there who should be excluded from this system? What better reason is there for exempting the Collector of the Port

of New York from the operation of these rules than the lowest clerk in his office? If the system is right, why not apply it to every appointive place in the Government except the cabinet?

*Third.* The next objection is to the principle on which this re-formation is said to be based—the claim that “the business of the Government should be done on business principles”! This is generally interpreted to mean obtaining the most work for the least money. If this is its true significance, it would seem that the jobbing, or contract, system might present decided advantages over it. And, if it is a mere question of dollars and cents, why should it not be adopted? There is no doubt that plenty of men might be found who would take the contract of doing the business, say of the Collector of Internal Revenue, for a much less percentage upon the amount collected than is paid under the present system or would be required by the reformed service. It is very true that no one would listen to a proposition to farm out our national offices in that manner, and yet the argument most used by the reformers would seem to lead to that if logically pursued. If it is mere cheap labor that is required, why not advertise for proposals and give the work to the lowest bidder who could furnish security for complete and faithful performance? If it means that a business man, having this machinery of his own to run, would select this method as the most effectual, is it quite borne out by facts? Would the Rothschilds select their clerks by competitive examination? If these are business principles, what business house has adopted them and thriven under their operation? This objection, be it remembered, is not to the system, but to the argument on which it is rested by its advocates.

*Fourth.* The next ground of doubt is the proposed exclusion of the civil placeman from active participation in partisan politics. Both in principle and policy this seems radically wrong. What right has the Government to exclude any citizen from the privileges which any other citizen may lawfully exercise? Whence came the power to declare that the officer shall not speak, write, organize, work for the success of his party, as well as any other man? Why shall he not preside in a primary, be a delegate to conventions, or a candidate for elective office? Has the Government a right to emasculate its servants? It is said that under this system the Government opens to him a career, and has a right to his time, attention, and strength.

This is hardly true. The Government has the right to require the placeman to perform specific duties only. The *man*—soul, body, and brain—is a constituent element of the sovereignty of which government is but a shadow. The right to discuss, persuade, lead, if he may, is one of the inseparable incidents of the freeman's right of self-government.

As a matter of policy, it would seem to be equally indefensible. The great mass of the evils which have crept into our political methods have unquestionably sprung from the failure of large numbers of our best citizens to give their actual personal attention to political affairs. Men have been unwilling to take time enough from the seductive pursuit of the dollar to attend primaries, or see to it that worthy men were put forward to represent them. They have been content to do nothing but vote. They have, year after year, remitted the labor, the detail, the organization of parties to those who, for selfish ends, perhaps, could find time to attend to them. To this may be traced the municipal misgovernment which is now so sadly bewailed. It is, by this "reform" system, proposed to add a hundred thousand more political neuters to this army of non-combatants. The civil placeman must always represent more than an average of intelligence. His knowledge of even one branch of the Government should make him a more than ordinarily good citizen and efficient and honest political worker. The Government has just as much right to this power as to his official labor, and would be far more foolish to throw it aside, and so increase the chances of ignorance and incapacity. It is not claimed that the present system always secures this result, but the system proposed claims as a merit that it renders it impossible. It should be remembered that the need of reform is, in this article, admitted; the question it asks is simply: is the re-formation which is proposed, the reform which is needed?

Two analogies are cited in support of this element of the system: (1) The regular army, and (2) the experience of England. Neither, it is believed, meets the objection. The regular army is, at best, an excrescence in a republican government. We have not yet devised any method of doing without it; but the idea, as well as the thing, is reduced to a "skeleton" in our system. It is merely a remedy prepared against possible disease. It has always been the dread of our statesmen, because it is the pet instrument of monarchical authority—a machine whose very perfection of action makes it

dangerous to liberty. It is a necessity which is admitted and—bewailed. Thus far it has been harmless, yet it will not do to make a standing army the model of the civil service of a great republic.

The analogy drawn from England is equally unsatisfactory. That the civil-service reform of Great Britain was a great step forward for that nation has already been conceded. It was a direct assault upon the citadel of class supremacy—a grand movement toward democracy. Its lesson fails of application to our service for many reasons, but chiefly because its real significance was not so much a change of the service as an attack upon other and more dangerous forces. The English service was already organized upon a basis of life tenure, while ours is, normally, a tenure for four years, and though not entirely secure for that period, it is, in a great majority of cases, practically undisturbed. It was not so much the power of removal which was the chief concern in the civil-service struggle in Great Britain, but the right of entrance to the service as a reward of a certain preparation, without regard to family or wealth.

*Fifth.* This brings us naturally to the next and, perhaps, most serious objection to the system proposed, to wit, the life tenure. As this is the most objectionable, so it is, perhaps, the most important feature of the system. Upon this mainly depend the advantages of its other features. As an economic measure, its chief claim to consideration rests upon the fact that a man can afford to work for less wages when he has a life tenure and a chance of promotion, than when his tenure is brief and uncertain, and promotion doubtful. As an incentive to faithfulness and efficiency, it also depends chiefly upon this element. It is very properly claimed that a man will be likely to attain greater proficiency in his duties if he has the prospect of promotion before him. The objections to this are twofold: (1) That a life tenure naturally and inevitably inclines to formalism, routine, and a blind adherence to established methods. Mr. Eaton declares that such has not been the result thus far in England, and is probably correct. The present English system came into existence as an iconoclast. It owed its life to the defects of the system it superseded. It has not yet gotten over its natural antagonism to all the methods of that system. That the first generation of placemen under the new should greatly improve upon the old system was to be expected. It was simply establishing their own claim of

merit, justifying the system which gave them support. But when this impetus shall have worn away, will they continue to improve their methods? Such does not seem a reasonable conclusion; and history does not encourage us to expect it. Life tenure has been the Gibraltar of that conservatism which counts all that has been sacred, and deems all change sacrilegious.

That a tenure of office, nominally for a term, but really terminable at the mere will of the appointing power, is an evil may well be conceded. That every officer, except the cabinet, appointed by the President or any head of a department, should be entitled to hold his place for a certain definite period, in case of good behavior—which period ought probably to exceed in length the presidential term—is a proposition which has hardly been seriously contested. The power to make it so by simple legislation only has been questioned.

Another objection to a life tenure is that it in effect establishes an office-holding class. It matters not how broad is the field from which its recruits are drawn, no sooner will they have entered the charmed circle of the civil service than they have separated themselves forever from the thoughts, sympathies, and aspirations of their fellow-citizens. They have then become a rank, a grade, a caste. Like the officers of the regular army, they will come very soon to lose that keen interest in the course of government which the citizen should feel. They will come to regard themselves, and be regarded by others, as something better than the ordinary voting herd—representatives of authority before whom the real individual sovereign shrinks into insignificance. In elective offices, the tendency, except in rare instances, has been toward short terms, and it is worthy of careful consideration whether it has not been for the better. Those States which have made most rapid progress toward individual liberty of thought and speech, and which have known a corresponding prosperity, have, with rare exceptions, inclined to short terms for all officers. On the other hand, life tenure and long terms, especially for magistrates and minor officers, were chiefly to be found at the South, and harmonized well with the spirit of slavery. Senator Blaine was unquestionably right when he recently pointed out the fact that the country had escaped great danger by the fact that the presidential term was for four years rather than a longer period.

Again, it is worthy of note that such a system, constantly growing in numbers and exclusiveness, more and more imbued

with that *esprit de corps* to which the "reformer" looks with such high hope, constantly getting farther and farther, in interest and sentiment, from the great body of the people, may, at any moment, become the instrument by which an ambitious usurper may overturn our institutions. We have now a hundred thousand civil officers. Can a nation, which looks with apprehension on a standing army of twenty thousand men, regard with favor a similar organization of far greater power? The prospect now is that this proportion will be greatly increased rather than diminished. It is not improbable that before the century ends it may be doubled. The demand is well-nigh imperative for an increase of force in every department. Should the Government undertake telegraphy and railroading, it would be impossible to estimate the number. To make this service a separate class, having a peculiar and distinct interest in the Government, uniformed and decorated with the marks of rank, may well be regarded as an experiment which might be fraught with great danger.

*Sixth.* Another frequently urged objection is in regard to the insufficiency of competitive examinations as a test of merit. This no doubt depends very much upon the character of the particular service. As a general rule, the duties of any minor officer may be mastered by a man of fair intelligence in a few days. In others, as in the postal service, experience is required to memorize details. In others still, the work to be performed is discretionary or judicial in its character, as in the Pension and Patent bureaus. In addition to all these there are certain places requiring especial technical skill, as in the case of the Treasury experts who pass upon the validity of notes, bonds, etc., and the type-setters in the Government printing-office. The store-keeper, gauger, or deputy-collector of the Internal Revenue Service may master his whole duty in a brief time, but no possible system of competitive examination can determine his value, since that depends on his activity, skill, and character. He may be the best officer in the service and yet never make a seizure, because his watchfulness may be such as to deter the violators of the law from attempting to operate in his district. In the postal service, examinations may very clearly indicate the capacity of an officer, since it chiefly depends on his ability to make a clean and rapid distribution of miscellaneous matter. In the judicial work of such bureaus as the Pension Office, no possible examination can disclose the value of the clerk. It is not the amount of his work but its character that

determines that question. Beyond a certain point, which, of course, may vary greatly in the different services, competitive examination offers no means of ascertaining the most valuable qualities of the officer or applicant. Literary excellence or scientific attainment is no test of those practical qualities, skill, tact, and character, which give value to a placeman's services. The experience of a few years of business life may be worth in such a place more than the most complete mastery of the university curriculum.

There is no little weight in the theory that change is beneficial and wholesome; it brings an infusion of fresh blood and new life; it puts a swarm of relentless enemies on the trail of the malfeasant; it promotes interest in political affairs. There are always ten men who want place to every one who holds office. It is true an election brings a universal fever—becomes often a scramble for place; but is it not better, with all its ills, than lethargy? These are questions which vitally touch the future of our institutions. They are at least of equal rank with the plea of economy, and entitled to like consideration.

We have not space to discuss the evils of what is termed "patronage," though, in the English sense, it has little place in our politics. No true man or patriot defends incompetency or dishonesty. The patriot who doubts, as well as the "reformer," desires good men and good results.

Those who entertain these doubts generally believe that a short secure term, with a preliminary examination not competitive, graded in its character to meet the requirements of the various ranks and services, and leaving to the appointing power discretion to appoint from any who shall pass the examination required for the specific grade, would more nearly comport with the spirit of our institutions, more probably secure an efficient service, be less likely to establish the reign of routine, and more certainly avoid possible danger, than the re-formation of the service now advocated under the name of "reform."

ALBION W. TOURGEE.